

## Pacific Islands Emergency Services strengthened through partnership

Written by Zarin Khan

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The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) donated lifesaving equipment to support emergency management services in Pacific this month. The Pacific Community (SPC) and Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) facilitated this handover.

Fiji is the first of five countries to receive the donated equipment valued at AUD 350,000 which included lifesaving devices such as defibrillators, neck collars, backboards and scoop stretchers and are said to significantly improve emergency services.

The emergency equipment was officially handed over by the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) to the National Fire Authority (NFA), St John Ambulance, Airports Fiji Ltd and Vaileka Ambulance Service. Also included in this handover were supplies for the Emergency Departments of the three Tertiary hospitals, Colonial War Memorial (CWM) Hospital, Lautoka Hospital and Labasa hospital.

NFA's acting chief executive officer, Mileta Seniroqa expressed her gratitude, "We are grateful to them (Queensland Ambulance Service) for considering Fiji's fire service in the distribution of its donations around the Pacific region. We are happy to receive the equipment, it will greatly

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help in the efficient delivery of ambulance services to the public,” she said.

This donation was made possible through the twinning programme coordinated by PIEMA, with the cost of transporting the items to the five Pacific Island countries funded by SPC’s Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific Project, funded by the European Union and ACP Group of States. The twinning arrangement pairs up emergency service providers within developing Pacific Island countries, like Fiji, with emergency service providers in developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand, with the aim of sharing knowledge on best practices to improve emergency response as well as equipment and resources. There are currently 10 formal agreements between Pacific Island countries and twinning partners and as a result of these arrangements, Pacific island countries benefit by not only improving their emergency services through capacity building but also through receiving quality emergency equipment to improve their capabilities.

‘Since starting the twinning arrangement we’ve had experts come to Pacific Island countries to facilitate workshops to upskill first responders and we also had the opportunity to send selected first responders to attend training in Australia and New Zealand. Through this partnership, we hope to offer people in the Pacific the best emergency service, so that when a disaster strikes, we are fully prepared to respond in the best way with safety as our key priority.’ PIEMA Officer Anthony Blake, said.

The partnership founded through PIEMA puts into practice Sustainable Development Goal number 17 which focuses on using partnerships to support and sustain development. PIEMA’s core function is to monitor and co-ordinate partnerships between countries to ensure emergency service providers operating within the Pacific are prepared to adequately respond to any type of emergency.

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